

# Oregon's Transportation System Faces Structural Funding Challenges

## How Did Oregon Get Here?

Maintaining Oregon's transportation system is something most people can agree the government should do. People walking, driving, biking and rolling value smooth roads, safe ways to cross the street, snow clearing in winter, highways free of trash and graffiti, and excellent customer service. But ODOT and other transportation agencies across Oregon are cutting back on staffing levels and maintenance spending. Why is that?

Oregon's way of funding transportation has become antiquated. The state relies on gas tax receipts combined with fees on vehicles and freight haulers to form the State Highway Fund, which then distributes money to transportation agencies across the state.

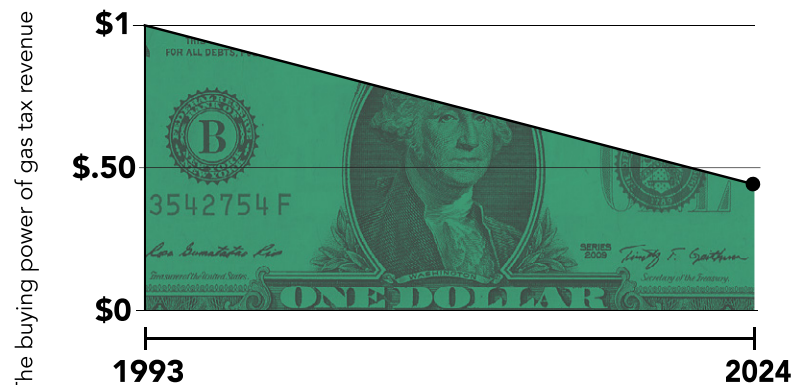
While this structure has supported the state's transportation system for a long time, the State Highway Fund as it is today won't be able to support the maintenance, operation, and safety of our system, and of ODOT, into the future. This is due to three main causes:

### 1 DECLINING GAS TAX REVENUE

Oregonians are driving increasingly fuel-efficient vehicles and switching to electric vehicles at a high rate – this is good as it will drive carbon emissions from transportation down 60% over the next 25 years. **But with increased fuel efficiency and more EVs, Oregon sees lower tax revenues and less money available to maintain the transportation system.**

### 2 HIGH INFLATION

Inflation has made maintaining the transportation system more expensive. The materials and staffing necessary to provide the services Oregonians rely on have gone up dramatically in cost. **Unlike many other states, Oregon's gas tax is static and isn't tied to inflation.** Our vehicle and freight hauler fees are also not tied to inflation. With every year that passes, the same dollar purchases fewer materials and less service.

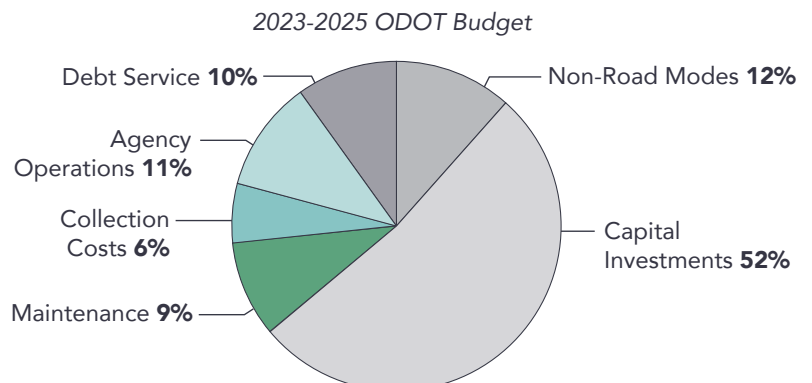


\* Since 1993, the last time the federal gas tax was raised, inflation has increased to where \$1 in '93 is worth \$0.46 in 2023

### 3 RESTRICTIONS ON AVAILABLE FUNDING

Only a small share of the funding that comes into ODOT can be used to maintain the state's transportation system and run the agency.

State law directs almost half of total state highway fund dollars to cities and counties and then dedicates over half of what's left to pay back bonds for past projects and invest in new projects, leaving only about 20 percent of every dollar available for state highway maintenance.



\*Not inclusive of one-time general funds granted during 2024 legislative session.

# Tough Road Ahead for Travelers

Oregonians can expect longer road closures, more trash and graffiti, worse winter driving conditions, more potholes, and slower DMV customer service because of this structural revenue issue. The decline in Oregon's transportation system won't be limited to state highways because counties and cities rely on the state highway fund for their maintenance services too. State, local, and neighborhood roads, sidewalks and bike lanes will all decline.

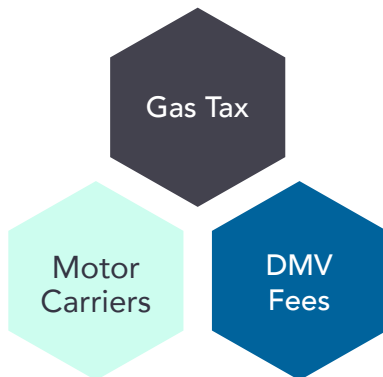


## Where Do We Go From Here?

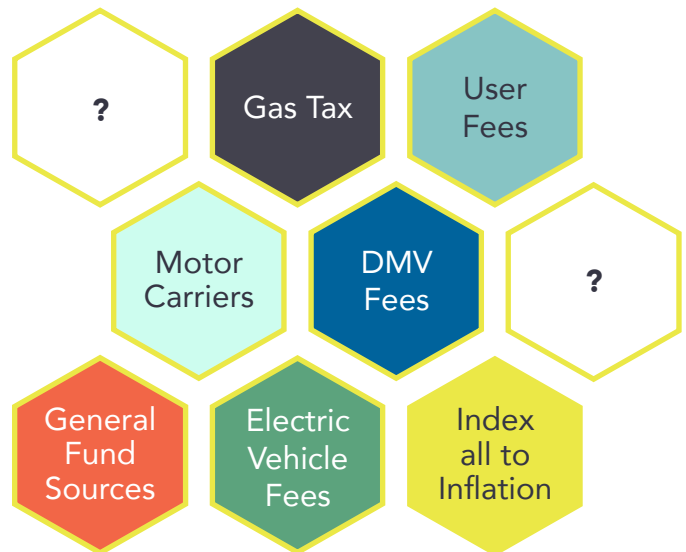
### A Road Map to Sustainably Fund Oregon's Transportation System

Sufficient, sustainable, and resilient funding is key to maintaining and modernizing our state's transportation system. Other states choose a variety of ways to sustainably fund a modern transportation system such as raising or indexing transportation fees to inflation, establishing new user fees like a road usage charge or tolls, or transfers from the general fund.

#### Oregon's Current State Highway Fund Revenue Sources:



#### Sustainable Funding Options for Oregon to Consider:



### URGENT ACTION IS NECESSARY FOR THE SERVICE OREGONIANS DESERVE

ODOT has enough funding to keep state highway maintenance levels roughly stable until the middle of 2025. After that, in the absence of additional revenue or revenue reform, **Oregonians will see a rapid decline in the safety, quality, and reliability of their transportation system.**

The legislature is working toward a comprehensive transportation modernization package in the 2025 legislative session. ODOT looks forward to working with our partners to help the Legislature identify sustainable solutions to Oregon's structural transportation budget issues.



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# Maintaining the System



## Oregon's Statewide Transportation System

ODOT's mission is to maintain a safe, accessible, and reliable transportation system for all Oregonians.

Statewide, ODOT is responsible for about 8,000 miles of roads, 2,770 bridges, 180,000 traffic signs, and countless critical safety features throughout the system. Our teams of dedicated professionals, locally based in 88 communities throughout Oregon, are on the front lines delivering essential day-to-day services that keep our roads open and safe every day.

As stewards of the state's multimodal transportation system, ODOT maintains and operates the system through two primary methods:

**ODOT's Maintenance and Operations Program** delivers day-to-day statewide services like emergency and incident response, snowplowing, pavement patching, roadway striping, guardrail repairs, litter and graffiti cleanup, and other essential maintenance services performed by ODOT crews.

**ODOT's Preservation Program** helps repair and replace bridge, pavement, culvert, and signal infrastructure to ensure long term performance. The investments in this program are prioritized to protect the state's existing infrastructure and safe operations while striving to strengthen seismic resiliency, connectivity, and reach Oregon's climate goals.

### By the numbers statewide (2021-2023 biennium):

- Maintenance equipment inventory: 6,183
  - This includes a range of equipment from a pick-up (light fleet) to a 10-yard truck (heavy fleet) to a grader (off-road construction equipment) to a slip-in sander unit.
- Total road miles: 7,972
- Total bridges: 2,773
- Miles of barrier and guardrail: 1,871
- Maintenance facilities: 1,100
- Total signs: 179,795
- Traffic signals: 1,218
- Minor and major sign installment and maintenance hours worked: 102,533
- Minor culverts and Inlets cleaned: 69,211
- Pick up shoulder litter hours worked: 130,775
- Mowable acres of grass: 19,209





## Region 4

ODOT maintains and operates the transportation system through the work of five distinct geographic regions. Each region includes unique communities, landscapes, and conditions that determine the priorities and approach to maintaining and operating the transportation system within the region.

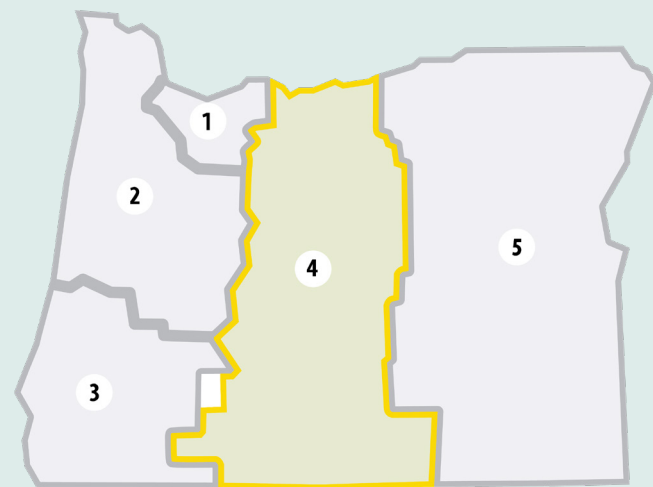
Region 4 builds, operates and maintains the state's multimodal transportation system for central Oregon. This region spans the east slopes of the Cascades to Arlington, Mitchell and Adel; and from the Columbia River to the north all the way to the California and Nevada state lines to the south. With a staff of about 350, Region 4 serves the residents of Wasco, Sherman, Gilliam, Jefferson, Wheeler, Crook, Deschutes, Lake and Klamath Counties, and partners with the Confederated Tribes of Warm Springs and the Klamath Tribes.

Running through the middle of the state, Region 4 includes major tourist destinations—including the scenic Columbia River Gorge, Mount Bachelor and the Cascade Lakes, the Klamath Basin and the state's only National Park, Crater Lake. The high desert terrain and mountain regions create geographic and climate challenges in maintaining rural state highways and two major freight corridors—I-84 and US-97. This includes increasingly severe fire seasons in the summer, extreme winds, landslides and rockfalls.

Region 4 also houses one of ODOT's dispatch centers responsible for incident response and crew safety for the entire eastern two thirds of the state. Region 4 has more snow on average than any other region. Snow removal and incident response due to winter conditions are major factors in how Region 4 must plan for and structure our maintenance crews. The traveling public counts on safe and reliable passage through mountain passes to travel in and out of the region for recreation, commerce and other needs.

### By the numbers Region 4:

- Total road miles: 1,862
- Number of bridges: 291
- Number of snowplows: 93
- Full-time employees: 350
  - Maintenance and operations: 257
- Total maintenance facilities: 21
  - Average maintenance facility age: 51 years



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# Keeping Oregon's Transportation System Clean and Safe



ODOT's mission is to maintain a safe, accessible, and reliable transportation system for all Oregonians. A key component of ODOT's maintenance work is clearing and cleaning the state's rights of way, including preventive investments to keep Oregonians safe and preserve our transportation infrastructure. Cleanup efforts improve health and safety conditions for everyone.

## A Growing Issue

Increases in graffiti, litter, and camps on state-owned land are symptoms of larger societal challenges. Since the pandemic, we've increased our efforts to address this issue. For the 2021-2023 biennium, \$22 million (3%) of ODOT's overall maintenance budget was invested in cleaning and restoring state highway property. ODOT relies on the same funding and staff for graffiti removal and site restoration as we do for storm response, road repairs, and responding to incidents. With structural funding challenges and rising costs, it's becoming increasingly difficult to meet the needs of the system.

## Safety is our Priority

Cleaning graffiti, removing litter, and restoring campsites can increase safety risks for the traveling public, ODOT crews, and our contractors. Infrastructure damage and costs to clean and restore these areas has increased in recent years.

ODOT invests in safety features such as fencing, rails, and barriers to help deter people from accessing dangerous locations. ODOT has processes to safely guide our staff and contractors as they perform this work, coordinate with partner agencies, notify campers, and handle personal items.

Unaddressed camping, graffiti and litter also impacts safety perceptions for neighbors, stops travelers from using bike paths and sidewalks, and are costly for ODOT and partners to address. Cleanup efforts provide a temporary fix to a much larger problem. Dedicated long-term solutions are critical to addressing this issue.

## Service Delivery

ODOT uses multiple approaches to tackle this complex and challenging work. ODOT has delivery programs and partnerships in place to deliver on all these services and the frequency is balanced with road maintenance needs and funding limitations.

### Litter

ODOT uses maintenance crews, youth litter patrols, Adults in Custody work crews, permitted volunteer groups, and an Adopt-A-Highway program to deliver litter clean up services. Due to safety risks, ODOT plans these services in advance, uses traffic control as needed, and has a formal process to safely guide staff as they perform this work and handle items collected.

### Graffiti

Graffiti removal is delivered through ODOT maintenance crews and contracted support. We've applied graffiti film, which can be peeled back to remove graffiti – saving crews from costly repairs and replacement – to new ODOT signs. Larger signs require highway closures, proactive alerts to industry partners of potential impacts, and can cost up to \$30,000 to replace.

## Camp Clean Up & Restoration

We work with community partners to schedule and execute campsite cleanups. Maintenance staff and law enforcement often talk with

campers and let them know camping is not allowed. Social service organizations offer available assistance and help connect people with resources. Crews then remove any remaining items, which we must store for 30 days. After the personal property and litter are removed from the site, ODOT works to fully restore the property.

### Access Prevention

Access prevention includes reinforced fencing, barriers, and vegetation and is delivered through ODOT crews and contracted support. ODOT crews maintain identified vegetation areas as natural barriers as part of our risk management work.

### Sponsor-a-Highway Pilot Program

In partnership with Governor Kotek, Central City Concern's Clean Start Program, and Tim Boyle of Columbia Sportswear, this collaborative pilot program aims to expand litter and graffiti cleanup

services in the I-405 corridor in the Portland Metro area. This program began in March 2024 and is funded through private donations. Litter removal is conducted through Central City Concern's Clean Starts Program and graffiti removal is completed by ODOT contractors.

### \$20M in new General Funding

In alignment with the Portland Central City Task Force and Governor Kotek's efforts to revitalize Portland, ODOT requested a one-time infusion of \$20 million in general fund dollars to increase the frequency of litter and graffiti removal, camp cleanup service and access prevention installment along major interstates and state highways in the Portland metro region. The legislature recognized the need and championed this effort with the passage of SB 5701 in the 2024 legislative session. Governor Kotek signed SB 5701 into law on April 17, 2024, and on April 18, ODOT began its work.

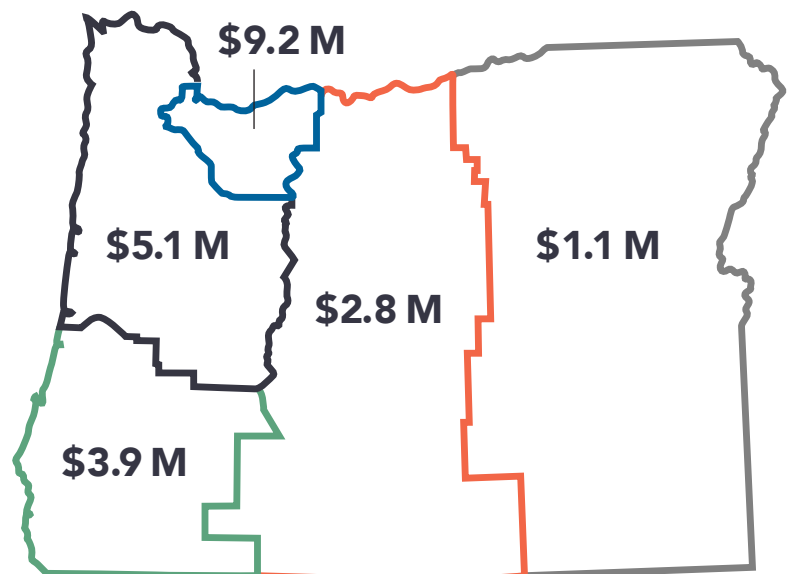
## By the numbers (2021-2023 biennium statewide):

For the 2021-2023 biennium, \$22M (3%) of ODOT's maintenance budget went to clean and restore state highway property.

- Litter – \$10.8M
- Campsite & Abandoned Property – \$10.3M
- Graffiti Removal – \$852,000

Expense by Region:

- R1 – \$9.2M (42%)
- R2 – \$5.1M (23%)
- R3 – \$3.9M (18%)
- R4 – \$2.8M (13%)
- R5 – \$1.1M (5%)



During the 2021-23 budget cycle, ODOT spent \$22 million statewide to clean and restore state highway property.



# About DMV

## Serving Oregonians

Almost every Oregonian is a customer of ODOT's Driver and Motor Vehicle Services Division, better known as Oregon DMV. We are the face of government for most Oregonians. DMV is a customer service organization, a protector of roadway safety, and a source of revenue for Oregon's transportation services.

### Here is a look at who we are and what we do:

- In 2023, our 59 field offices served about 10,000 customers statewide each day.
- Every month, we see more than 1 million visitors to DMV2U, where customers can conduct more than 20 online transactions and find information.
- Our three call centers answer about 1.1 million customer inquiries per year.
- DMV maintains about 3.7 million driver licenses and ID cards and 4.4 million vehicle registrations.
- Annually, DMV processes more than 900,000 license, permit, and ID card issuances, renewals, and replacements and about 2.2 million vehicle registration renewals.

We know how important DMV services are to Oregonians and businesses across the state, and we strive to provide excellent, accessible, and reliable customer service. Yet DMV faces increased workloads while staffing hasn't kept pace with population growth. Aging facilities and safety issues contribute to the challenge of providing great service.



## Field Services Challenges

Oregon's population has increased more than 20 percent over the last two decades, growing by about 750,000 people from 2001 to 2024. That means an increased demand for DMV services, but staffing has not kept pace with that growth. In the same period, from 2001 to 2024, DMV's budgeted field staff has increased by just six individuals (404 then, 410 now). For all of DMV, we have seven more budgeted staff than in 2001 (846 then, 853 now). Staffing challenges combined with inadequate facilities and increasing incidents of customer threats—and even violence—impact DMV's ability to provide the level of customer service that Oregonians deserve.

## Staffing

Staffing is a daily challenge. In 2023, our field offices had an average vacancy and absence rate of about 30%. Even if all positions were filled, there are not enough employees to cover what is needed. Managers work daily to shift staff among offices to maintain the minimum number of employees necessary to keep offices open. Often managers are forced to neglect other critical responsibilities, spending much of their day at the counter to compensate for lack of staff. At times, it is not possible to open a given office at all. During 2023, one or more DMV field offices were closed for a total of 118 separate days due to staffing. Such closures create even bigger impacts in areas of our state with fewer and more dispersed DMV offices, leaving customers without the ability to access key DMV services unless they travel significant distances.

## Customer Behavior and Safety

In June 2022, DMV established a Threat Assessment Team that has met 41 times to address specific threats of violence made against customer service staff. This resulted in 32 customers receiving notice to contact DMV through specific channels, and that coming to a field office would be considered trespass.

Our dedicated frontline staff interact with customers every day and strive to provide the highest level of customer service despite increased demand and insufficient staffing levels. However, unsafe customer behavior is contributing to additional employee absences and exacerbates DMV's systemic staffing challenges.

## Inadequate facilities

DMV has 59 field offices throughout the state. Many of those offices are too small or otherwise inadequate to provide the level of service that Oregonians expect and deserve. Moving or even updating an existing field office is expensive. When budgets are tight, facilities work is prioritized well below the need for staff to serve Oregonians. Each biennium, it becomes increasingly difficult for DMV to appropriately relocate, update, and maintain these facilities.

### About DMV2U

Before the pandemic, there were three transactions that could be completed online. In 2020, DMV fully launched DMV2U. Through DMV2U, residents can now complete more than 20 online transactions, including renewing vehicle registration, renewing or replacing a driver license or ID card, paying certain fees, reporting an address change, and much more. These online services save hundreds of thousands of customers a trip to a DMV office. Even those who don't go online benefit; every person who goes online frees up a spot in line at a field office.

### Real ID in Oregon

The federal Real ID Act passed in 2005 and set national standards for state driver licenses and ID cards. Enforcement at airport security checkpoints will begin May 7, 2025.

Oregon began issuing Real ID credentials when our new driver system went live in July 2020. As of mid-2024, about 28% of Oregonians with a driver license or ID card have a Real ID.

This summer, DMV is launching a campaign to urge people to beat the coming rush for a Real ID. During the 2024 legislative session, the legislature approved ODOT's request for 26 temporary field office staff to focus on Real ID issuance. The positions and campaign costs are covered by the extra fee charged to Real ID customers, which is restricted solely for Real ID purposes.

### Safety

DMV promotes roadway safety by issuing driver licenses, as well as suspending or revoking them for unsafe driving behavior or when someone is no longer fit to drive due to medical reasons. DMV also houses Oregon's State Highway Safety Office, focused on curbing risky driving behaviors through education, as well as issuing federal grant money to local and Tribal governments, law enforcement, schools, and community organizations.



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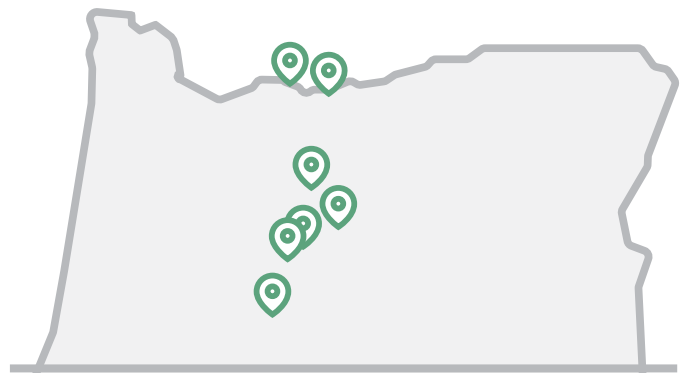
# Bend/The Dalles – Central Oregon/Columbia Gorge Area DMV

The central Oregon and Columbia Gorge offices of DMV serve customers through:

- Seven locations: Bend, La Pine, Redmond, Madras, Prineville, The Dalles, Hood River\*.

- 31 total staff:

- Bend – One office leader and eleven front-line staff.
- La Pine – No assigned staff. open Thursdays and staffed from other offices.
- Redmond – One office leader and four front-line staff.
- Madras – One office leader and one front-line staff.
- Prineville – One office leader and one front-line staff.
- The Dalles – One office leader and three front-line staff.
- Hood River – One office leader and two front-line staff.
- Three managers cover these offices.



## Additional metrics

- In 2023, the seven central Oregon and Columbia Gorge area offices serviced 211,315 customers, accounting for about 9% of the state's customer visits.
- Customer language needs in the area are mostly English and Spanish. Four of the 31 front-line staff (13%) are bilingual. With limited bilingual skills, we rely on technology, using Pocket Talk translation devices to better communicate with these customers.

Like other regions of the state, office issues are a concern in the central Oregon and Columbia Gorge area. The La Pine office is too small to adequately serve the volume of customers it receives on the one day per week it is open. As the surrounding area continues to grow, it is becoming increasingly apparent that La Pine needs permanent staffing and a larger office. With residences being used as second/vacation homes, customers from outside the area are visiting the La Pine and Bend offices more frequently. The Bend DMV office meets customers' needs but wait times can be long. The Prineville and Hood River offices require relocation or facility upgrades. Issues at these locations include inadequate lobby space that frequently leave standing-room-only for customers at both locations, lack of access to public restrooms in Hood River, and other building issues that have been unresolvable to date.

Sufficient staffing remains DMV's biggest challenge to offering excellent and reliable customer service. Staff is moved between offices daily in this area to provide relief. La Pine is staffed every Thursday from Bend which further limits the ability to send relief to other offices. Hood River frequently sees customers from Portland attempting to avoid long wait times. In 2023, DMV offices in the area closed 16 times due to staffing limitations. For several months in 2022, to help mitigate unplanned closures, DMV closed the Redmond office and reduced hours at The Dalles office.



- Total number of DMV budgeted employees, including Field and Headquarters: 853.
  - Total number of DMV Field Services budgeted employees: 410.
  - Total number of DMV Field Services budgeted positions in the central Oregon/Gorge area: 31.
- \*Data for Hood River was also included with Downtown Portland/Metro area in June.



# Supporting the System behind Oregon's Transportation System



## » The Network of Support Behind ODOT's Critical Services

ODOT's mission is to maintain a safe, accessible, and reliable transportation system for all Oregonians. To deliver on this mission, the agency relies on a vast support system that covers everything from hiring to technology and contracting to building management.

These support services help ODOT:

- Ensure Oregonians' information is stored securely.
- Build and maintain facilities that store snowplows, sand, gravel and all the necessary equipment to maintain Oregon's roads and bridges.
- Build and maintain facilities that keep Oregon's roads safe and keep Oregonians comfortable when completing their DMV business.

- Procure supplies and personnel quickly to respond to emergency situations like wildfires.
- Provide modern, accessible online services for DMV customers.
- Create contracting business opportunities for small and disadvantaged businesses.
- Operate and monitor technology systems that process critical transactions like vehicle registrations and driver's licenses.
- Ensure important, timely roadside information is available for travelers.

And much more.

## Responding to emergencies, customers, and changing technology

ODOT's ability to respond to the needs of Oregon travelers, ensure the safety of Oregon's transportation system, and preserve access to DMV services relies on a critical support network. This network provides the technology, infrastructure, and contracting capacity to meet these needs every day and ensure the high level of service Oregonians deserve.

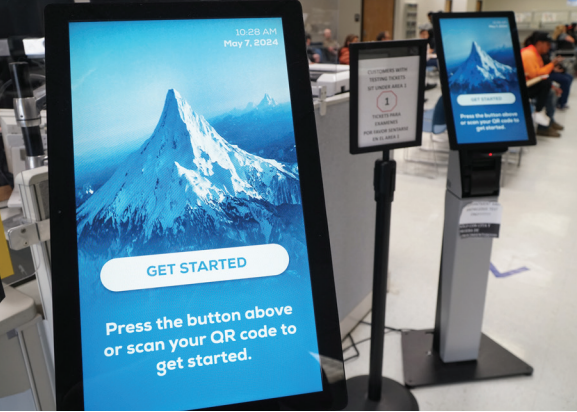
When a wildfire begins, crews spring into action to keep roads safe and support emergency response efforts. Support services ensure rapid procurement

of the necessary supplies or additional personnel to aid in the response.

When electronic road signs need replacement or a signal stops working, support services work quickly to solve the problem so important roadside information is displayed for travelers.

When the DMV implements a new, modern lobby queuing system for customer convenience, support services ensure that each new system is up and running on the day of launch.





## Challenges

### Technology

ODOT has a network of critical revenue collection and other technology systems that have been built on an outdated technology foundation. These current systems provide an inefficient, and sometimes vulnerable, way to manage ODOT's important data, customer information, and revenue streams. If these systems fail, it would impact revenue collection and distribution, disrupt communication and delivery systems, impact DMV's ability to serve the public, and ultimately impact ODOT's ability to meet the needs of Oregonians.

### Facilities

ODOT owns and maintains 1,100 properties, including DMV offices, office buildings, maintenance yards, weigh stations and ports of entry. Many of ODOT's facilities are not seismically-sound, in a state of disrepair due to years of deferred maintenance, and not comfortable or safe for customers or employees.

Small, outdated facilities impact customer experience for Oregonians. Inadequate facilities add additional challenges to responding to extreme weather events and maintaining the transportation system. For example, today's snowplows are larger than they were in the past, and the truck bays at many maintenance stations are not wide enough or deep enough to accommodate them. This creates an added challenge for critical maintenance work during snow or ice storms and shortens the life of this costly and highly specialized equipment.

### Funding

Secure, stable funding is needed to ensure ODOT can maintain a safe, accessible, and reliable transportation system for all Oregonians—with modern, secure technology; adequate facilities; and well-trained employees ready to serve.

### By the numbers:

- **1,100** – Number of properties owned and maintained to provide DMV services, weigh stations, maintenance facilities, and staff workplaces.
- **1930** – The year the oldest weigh station remaining in Oregon was built (Philomath). At current funding levels and rates of replacement, it would take at least 50 years to replace outdated weigh station infrastructure.
- **4,800** – Number of employees working in 88 communities across the state who rely on safe, secure buildings to serve Oregonians every day.
- **\$1 billion** – Amount of goods and services procured each year, which supports local economies, small businesses, disadvantaged businesses, and minority-owned businesses.
- **1 million** – Number of monthly online visitors seeking secure and efficient online DMV transactions.



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